1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

III

DAILY LIFE

The Day's Work

THE villager wakes and rises with the sun. Being at liberty to take his repose at any time of the day, whenever indeed he feels a tiredness in his limbs, he is not likely to be a lie-abed in the morning. If the weather be hot he is early at work in the garden to have his day's task through before the sometimes grilling heat of noon; if the night has been a cold one (for many New Guinea nights are cold to those who live in New Guinea), he issues forth from his house bringing some of the night's fire with him, to meet the sun and to profit by the warmth of its first rays.

There is no bustle of preparation for breakfast. A lump or so of cold taro or a fragment of roast sago left overnight constitutes the morning meal, and often enough a man is content to go with none at all. If he have work before him in the garden he will soon set off accompanied by his wife and children, with his axe and knife in his hand and his rude digging-stick over his shoulder; usually, too, with a long spear against some chance of game. If there be no immediate call for his masculine strength in the garden he allows his wife and children to go to their work alone, to perform the drudgery of weeding and grubbing while he employs his mind and fingers upon some more interesting or creative task—such as the fashioning of a spear, the plaiting of a cane belt, or the chopping of a mess-bowl from a block of wood.

Such employments as these he follows with a deal of comfortable assiduity, for not only does he see the object take shape as he proceeds, but the nature of his work permits of a seat in the shade and, like knitting or hemstitching, does nothing to hinder conversation.

Some women will have remained at home to perform

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

the ground before them. Then the waiting spearmen discharge their darts at the flying disk, seeing in imagination the wild pig flying past the hunter. This, like most native games, has no finality and no winner. Whoever lodges his mock spear in the rolling disk utters his shout of triumph—maybe his own name or that of his clan—while all rush forward to recover their weapons and form into line again for the next attempt.

A more uproarious pastime is the sham fight between two contending parties, when mock spears are thrown with great violence and evaded with great address. The spear is usually the six-feet-long stalk of a large herb weighted with its rhizome, a very solid knob, which gives power and directness to the missile and makes it worth one's while to dodge. The shield is a miniature of light palm spathe. Armed with these weapons the parties attack one another, launching their spears or parrying or dodging those of the enemy with all the cries and actions of true warfare. When the game is played by small boys, the contending parties draw closer and closer, snatching up and returning the spent weapons of their adversaries with gradually mounting spirit, until the combat thickens and may become a hand-to-hand scuffle in which the spear is turned into a club. An unlucky hit may compel one of the combatants to withdraw weeping from the fray, but one never sees bad blood engendered in these village games, however warlike, and a stand-up fight must be a very rare occurrence.

With the approach of dusk the various families of the village will forsake amusement and employment, or the lack of either, for the business of eating their evening meal. About this there is little or no formality. The housewife is responsible for the due preparation of the repast, which is the only regular one of the day. If she be a dutiful spouse she seldom fails in punctuality, for the hungry Orokaiva husband is short-tempered and any break-down in the catering of his household will cause domestic disagreement. (Indeed, it would appear that neglect of household duties may be as just and potent a cause of divorce as actual infidelity.) There will be a few friendly gifts of food. If a man

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

earthenware pot (*obu*) the cooked taro is transferred to smaller pots, wooden bowls (*teva*), or coco-nut shells, in which it is served.

Food is placed in front of the principal people present, and the others soon group themselves round the various dishes. There is none but a tacit invitation, simply a jerk of the head. The meal goes on for the most part in silence—that is, in respect of conversation, though not always in respect of mastication and swallowing. The only table utensils are coco-nut spoons (*age*), in the form of little boat-shaped scoops, and three- or four-pronged forks (*sagi*) made of bone or wood. The latter, however, are said to be old men's implements. It was suggested that they were needed because of the clumsiness of an old man's fingers, but the fact is that there is something honorific about them. A young man would not feel at home with a *sagi*; he would be, in a manner, exceeding his rights.

Nearly all Orokaiva cooking is done in earthenware pots. They are even carried on expeditions. But on emergency there is the method of cooking with hot stones. The food is placed on a layer of leaves upon the hot stones; more leaves and more hot stones are laid on top, and the food slowly bakes. The method of cooking in a pit, with heated stones below and above is known, but I have never seen it put into practice. It is alluded to in some of the legends and is presumably an old fashion. The boiling of water by heated stones is used in fumigation. The medicines are placed together with water in a wooden dish (*teva*), and when the heated stones are thrown in, the steam rises and the sick man stoops over it to be fumigated.

Salt. The native shows the usual craving for salt, so that among the inlanders it is useful pay for carriers. Visiting the coast, these inlanders will even take calabashes and bring them home full of sea-water. The only means of obtaining it locally is by burning certain leaves and the husks of coco-nut or *Tauga* nuts. Over a layer of dry wood are set a number of large pottery fragments, and over these again are piled the leaves and husks. Ignited, the pile smokes abundantly, and when it has burnt away leaves a residue of

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

common articles of diet. Comparing five lists made in different parts of the Division, I find that they all contain taro, pig, and coco-nut in common; three contain *Puga* and *Tauga*; two bread-fruit and a kind of banana; while the other ingredients are various, with the exception of *simbiri*, or croton, which occurs in four of the five lists.

The initiates gather round the dish of *suna* and bend over it so as to be fumigated by the rising steam. They hold their hands in the steam, and then withdrawing them massage their joints. They take handfuls of the hot leaves and apply them to their private parts, their hip-joints, their elbows, their arm-pits, &c. They end by eating the stew. The other villagers stand by, themselves partaking and sponging their bodies with the leaves. The *suna* is sometimes set out in a wooden dish (*tava*) and a hot stone placed in it to increase the volume of steam, while the initiates stooping over the dish may be covered with pandanus mats to give them something like a Turkish bath.

After partaking of the *suna* the initiate is at liberty to resume his full diet. (During the last two or three days he has eaten nothing but banana and sugar-cane.) But even so he must be cautious. Before passing him a piece of taro one of the elders will pass it under his legs—a queer precaution which appears again and again in Orokaiva ceremonies, either as a purification or as a prophylaxis. Having thus received the taro, the hungry initiate must nibble it only and put it aside for a while. Furthermore, he must not handle it, but convey it to his mouth on a piece of stick as a fork. If he should handle it and afterwards scratch his head the penalty would be the severe one of baldness.

Meaning and Purpose of the Ceremonies

Initiation. The actual occurrences of the initiation cycle having been described we are now in a position to discuss their meaning and purpose. We may begin by considering the initiation ceremony described on pp. 180–3. Laying special stress upon the fact that the terrifying threats of the spirits against the candidates are apparently averted by the

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

female betrayer. Any such object or substance which has been in close association with or has belonged to the victim will serve to personify him, as it were, when the sorcerer wishes to work off his feelings.

Anything, indeed, which he has merely touched will suffice. A very common example of the magician's symbol consists of a morsel of food left over by his prospective victim—the remains of a betel-nut, for instance, or even the husk. It is for this reason that native travellers will always dispose so carefully of the remnants of their food. In their own village it does not matter over-much, because it is inhabited by familiar friends from whom they have little to fear; but in a strange village who knows how many sorcerers there may be awaiting their chance? I have watched a party of coastal carriers after a midday meal in an inland village. They had roasted some yams in the open fire and in the usual way scraped off the charred surface before eating them. Before leaving they went so far as to stamp these minute black scrapings thoroughly into the dust, and when questioned about it made no secret of their apprehensions. It is the same motive—not that of tidiness, as one was tempted to think—which sometimes makes carriers in a strange village throw their coco-nut husks into the surrounding bush for concealment, or better still into the running water for neutralization. Again, when working in his garden a man will keep a watchful eye on his *hetava*, or string bag, for fear that while his back is turned an enemy should abstract some small belonging on which to work magic against him.

There is a somewhat different style of magic in which the necessity for contact is still apparent, but which it is not easy to include in the same category with the above. In this style the magical mixture is prepared first independently of the victim, and is then brought into contact with him. Sometimes such a mixture may be kept in a bamboo 'bottle'. When it is called into use the sorcerer creeps on his victim in his sleep, dips a